Sociology of Religion (SOCI-333)
Rice University
Department of Sociology

Lecturer: Dr. Craig Considine (craigconsidinetcd.com - @CraigCons)
E-mail: craig.m.considine@rice.edu
Telephone: 713-348-4448
Emergency Telephone: 713-534-7770
Class Meetings: Monday/Wednesday/Friday at 9:00am-9:50am (Sewall Hall 303)
Office: Sewall Hall 556
Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday/Friday (10:00am-10:55am), or by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course has two primary aims: 1) to shed light – in a sociologically manner - on the ever-changing understanding of "religion"; and 2) to critically examine religion in American society through the lens of history, belief/practice, organization, and particular religious traditions. To start us off, we need to address various definitions of "religion," a fluid concept that continues to be debated by sociologists and intellectuals alike. This approach sets the groundwork for exploring religion in the United States (at a macro-level). We explore the notion of "separation of church and state," which leads us onto the debate concerning the levels of secularization in American society.

Considering that religion has always had a significant impact over the lives of American citizens, it's important to also dive into the connection between nationalism and religion. The American "civil religion" will be discussed in detail and conversations will be had in relation to the idea of America as a "Christian nation." Despite the United States being largely populated by Christians – and evangelical Christians at that - there are many other religious groups that deserve our attention including Jews and Muslims, as well as "non-religious" groups like atheists, new atheists, and the "spiritual, but not religious."

No "sociology of religion" course is complete without giving attention to the phenomena of "religious extremism." In addition to this "hot topic," the links between racism and religion will be considered in light of anti-Semitism and the Islamophobia industry in the United States and beyond. The last few weeks of the semester provide an opportunity to reflect on religious pluralism and the prospects and challenges of creating a more tolerant and vibrant country.

By the end of the semester, I hope that you will be able to shed light on the question: What does the future of "religion" look like in America?

PROMISES

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

1. Shed light on the different ways of interpreting and defining "religion."
2. Develop a critical ability to discuss the impact of secularization on American society and the lives of American citizens in general.
3. Cultivate a deeper sociological understanding of the links between religion and nationalism as well as religion and racism.

RESPONSIBILITIES/COURSE POLICIES

As with any course, you should do the readings. Class discussions will be open and free flowing. Reading the material before class makes for a much more vibrant atmosphere. I hope that you will let your voice and ideas be heard.

In terms of attendance, I'll hand out a sign in sheet at the beginning of class. I consider attendance in your final grade. I'll give all that I have to ensure that this isn't one of those classes that simply "blow off."

I also take into account classroom participation in your final grade. That being said, I understand that not all students are going to be comfortable discussing matters in class. You can always send me an email or come see me in my office to talk about things relating to the readings or current events. I'll consider that to be part of your participation grade.

Lastly, in relation to late policy, please communicate with me if you're unable to hand in your assignment by the deadline. One more thing - I don't like computers in the classroom. I find them distracting. Also, please refrain from using your cell phones.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT OF ME

1) I'll respond to all questions or queries you may have about the course as well as current events relating to religion in America. Feel free to email at any moment.
2) I'll switch up the teaching methods throughout the semester. I'll usually speak for 15-20 minutes at the beginning of the class and then open it up for discussion. In addition to the lectures and discussions, we might engage in small-group work, watch videos/short documentaries, or read articles from news websites or papers.
3) I'll stick to the syllabus as much as possible, however, the syllabus is a loose version of what we want to be getting to this semester. Our discussions will lead us into organic territory that I may deem important to focus on at the time. Please trust my vision as your teacher. Let's go with the flow.
4) I love to teach. I love engaging in intellectual discussions. I'll be enthusiastic about our topics and reading material each class meeting. That being said, I might go into a tangent that I think is important. If this happens, there's no need to freak out. Trust that it's going somewhere. I wouldn't bring it up if it was irrelevant. At the same time, I don't expect you to incorporate the "tangents" in your assignments.

5) I'm passionate about fighting racism, particularly Islamophobia. Sometimes my passion gets the best of me. I have been criticized for being too subjective. However, I'll also (at times) play devils advocate in order to consider opposing views or experiences.
6) I'll always begin and end class on time.
7) I'll grade promptly and offer you extensive feedback on your papers.
8) I'm always learning. Sometimes you might have questions that I have no answers to. I'm human, not some genius.

OFFICE HOURS

I'll hold office hours on the following days and times throughout the semester:

Monday/Wednesday/Friday (10:00am-10:55am), or by appointment

I'm usually in my office every day. Feel free to stop by unannounced. If I'm not there for whatever reason, send me an email and we will find another time to meet.

ASSESSMENT

1) **Student Participation (15%)**
2) **Mini-Paper (15%)** – Friday, February 19th (4 pages)
3) **Mid-term Paper (25%)** – Monday, March 14th (6 pages)
4) **Final Paper (40%)** – To be determined (8 pages)

GRADING SCALE

Grading in this course is based on a "traditional" American scale. Plus/minus grading will be used for final grades. The range of grades include:

A = 93-100 A- = 90-92 B+ = 87-89 B = 83-86 B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79 C = 73-76 C- = 70-72 D+ = 67-69 D = 63-66
D- = 63-66 F = <59

A = "Extraordinary work" which shows excellent understanding of the course materials. The work has exceptional originality and clarity.
B = "Good work" which shows a strong grasp of the course materials. The work demonstrates analytical rigor, but there are errors. Not the most original piece of work.
C = "Poor work" which shows serious errors or misunderstanding of the course material. The work is incoherent and difficult to follow.
D = "Very poor work" which shows little effort. The work has very serious errors and shows an obvious misunderstanding of the course material.
F = "No work or offensive work" which shows no effort to engage with the course material.

STATEMENT ON DISABILITY

Students with a documented disability needing adjustments or accommodation should speak to me within the first few weeks of the semester. Your disability will remain entirely confidential. Students with disabilities should also contact the Disability Support Services in the Allen Center.

HONOR CODE

Students are expected to abide by the Rice Honor System:
(http://honor.rice.edu/emplibrary/Student%20Handbook%20(rev%201-1-08).pdf)

Cheating will not be tolerated under any circumstance. The papers that you write must be entirely your own work. Taking someone else's work and passing it off as your own is plagiarism. Copying the work of others is both unethical and illegal. Consequences for plagiarism may include zero points for the assignment, failure of the course, or possibly expulsion from the university. Do not do it! I'll take violations of the Honor System very seriously. Any suspected infringement will be reported. If you have concerns about how to cite a source and give proper credit, please see me.

READING MATERIAL

The syllabus is designed to include many, but not all, of the readings. There is no main textbook/book for this course. Journal articles, book chapters, newspaper/blog pieces, and videos will be placed in the relevant week folder as the course progresses. The marking *** is required readings in order to participate in class discussions while the marking ** is suggested reading. Readings marked * are optional readings that you will find helpful. These readings are typically news or blog pieces that are shorter and "less academic."

WEEK 1: STUDYING RELIGION SOCIOLOGICALLY

Monday, January 11th – Course Introduction

Wednesday, January 13th – Defining Religion

*** HARRISON, V. (2006) "The Pragmatics of Defining Religion in a Multi-cultural World," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 59, pp.133-152. http://www.gla.ac.uk/0t4/humanities/files/mindmapping/Religion1_files/docs/Pragmatics.pdf

Friday, January 15th – Defining Religion (Cont.)

*** GEERTZ, C. (1993) "Religion as a cultural system," in C. Geertz *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, Waukegan: Fontana Press. *Read pages 87-98.

https://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic152604.files/Week_4/Geertz_Religon_as_a_Cultural_System_.pdf

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WEEK 2: "CHURCH AND STATE"

Monday, January 18th – No class

Wednesday, January 20th – Overview of How It Shaped the Nation

*** HAMBURGER, P. (2002) "Introduction" in P. Hamburger *Separation of Church and State*, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.
http://www.thedivineconspiracy.org/Z5242V.pdf

Friday, January 22nd – Is There Even a Separation?

*** EPPS, G. (2011) "Constitutional Myth #4: The Constitution Doesn't Separate Church and State," retrieved on 10 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:
http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2011/06/constitutional-myth-4-the-constitution-doesnt-separate-church-and-state/240481/
*** BLANKLEY, B. (2014) "Separation of Church and State Is Not in the U.S. Constitution," retrieved on 10 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:
http://www.christianpost.com/news/separation-of-church-and-state-is-not-in-the-u-s-constitution-122657/

WEEK 3: NATIONALISM AND RELIGION

Monday, January 25th - America's "Civil Religion"

*** BELLAH, R.N. (1967) "Civil Religion in America," *Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 96,1, pp.1-21.
Available online: http://www.robertbellah.com/articles_5.htm
** FERRARI, S. (2010) "Introduction - Civil Religion: Models and Perspectives," *The George Washington Journal of International Law and Economies*," 41,4, pp.749-764.
http://docs.law.gwu.edu/stdg/gwilr/PDFs/41-4/1-%20Ferrari.pdf
*LICHTERMAN, P. (2008) "Religion and the Construction of Civic Identity," *American Sociological Review*, 73, pp.83-104.
http://dornsifecms.usc.edu/assets/sites/888/docs/Religion_and_the_Construction_of_Civic_Identity.pdf

Wednesday, January 27th – American Identity as a Type of Religion (Exercise)

Friday, January 29th – Review of "Civil Religion"

WEEK 4: PLACES OF WORSHIP, CULTURE AND SECULARIZATION

Monday, February 1st – Christian Congregations

*** AMMERMAN, N.T. (1998) "Culture and Identity in the Congregation," in N.T. Ammerman, J.W. Carroll, C.S. Dudley, & W. McKinney (eds.) *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, Nashville: Abingdon Press.
https://myluthernet.luthersem.edu/ICS/icsfs/Culture_Identity_in_Cong.pdf?target=ed315f2d-3575-47d8-b70b-bfddfe904020

Wednesday, February 3rd – "Ground Zero" Mosque

*** 60 MINUTES. (2010) "60 Minutes on the Ground Zero Mosque: Pamela Geller, Radical Imam Rauf, Sharif El-Gamal," retrieved on 10 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRRAh2iUFUc

Friday, February 5th - The Secularization Debate

*** CASANOVA, J. (2006) "Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective," retrieved on 10 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:
http://www.iasc-culture.org/THR/archives/AfterSecularization/8.12CCasanova.pdf

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WEEK 5: "THE NONES"

Monday, February 8th – The Religiously Unaffiliated

*** LIPKA, M. (2015) "A closer look at America's rapidly growing religious 'nones,'" retrieved on 7 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:
http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/13/a-closer-look-at-americas-rapidly-growing-religious-nones/
*** LIPKA, M. (2015) "Religious 'nones' are not only growing, they're becoming more secular," retrieved on 7 January 2015, found on the World Wide Web:
http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/11/religious-nones-are-not-only-growing-theyre-becoming-more-secular/

Wednesday, February 10th – Atheism Vs. New Atheism (Guest Lecture, Kyle Jones)

Friday, February 12th – "Spiritual, Not Religious"

*** HERZOG, P.S. (2014) "Are Emerging Adults 'Spiritual but Not Religious,'" retrieved on 7 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:
http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/224506.pdf
** MERCADANTE, L. (2014) "Good news about the 'spiritual but not religious,'" retrieved on 7 January 2015, from the World Wide Web:
http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2014/02/22/good-news-about-the-spiritual-but-not-religious/

WEEK 6: THE RISE OF MEGACHURCHES

Monday, February 15th – Historical Overview and Definition of Megachurch

*** EAGLE, D.E. (2015) "Historicizing the Megachurch," *Journal of Social History*, 10, pp.1-16.
http://www.soc.duke.edu/~dee4/Eagle_Historicizing_Megachurch_Final.pdf

Wednesday, February 17th – Case Study - Hillsong, New York City

*** G.Q. (2015) "Inside Hillsong, New York City's Hippest Mega Church," retrieved on 7 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Oq21iaHkt0

Friday, February 19th – The Present and Future of Megachurches

*** BIRD, W. & THUMMA, S. (2011) "A New Decade of Megachurches," *Hartford Institution For Religion Research*, Hartford, Connecticut.
http://hirr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/New-Decade-of-Megachurches-2011Profile.pdf

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WEEK 7: RELIGION ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

Monday, February 22nd – Religious Tolerance at Rice – How Much Tolerance is There?

*** FALK, J. (2015) "Boniuk Institute surveys religious tolerance among undergraduates," retrieved on 8 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:
http://news.rice.edu/2015/04/27/boniuk-institute-surveys-religious-tolerance-among-undergraduates/
*** KELLER, D. (2015) "Religious diversity survey reveals student opinions of tolerance at Rice," retrieved on 8 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:
http://www.ricethresher.org/news/religious-diversity-survey-reveals-student-opinions-of-tolerance-at-rice/article_b1a9d6d8-e9d4-11e4-b00c-173778f20375.html

Wednesday, February 24th – Duke University and Wheaton College – Case Studies of Inclusion and Exclusion

*** SAFI, O. (2015) "Unwavering Pluralism and the Beloved Community in the Face of Duke's Decision," retrieved on 8 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:
http://www.onbeing.org/blog/unwavering-pluralism-and-the-beloved-community-in-the-face-of-dukes-decision/7217
*** JALABI, R. (2015) "Muslim call to prayer highlights division and solidarity at Duke University," retrieved on 8 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:
http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/23/muslim-call-to-prayer-duke-university-highlights-divisions-solidarity

*** BRACHEAR PASHMAN, M. (2016) "Wheaton College seeks to fire Christian professor over view of Islam," retrieved on 8 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:
http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-wheaton-college-professor-fired-20160105-story.html
*** WHEATON COLLEGE MEDIA CENTER. (2016) "Wheaton College Statement Regarding Dr. Larycia Hawkins," retrieved on 8 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:
http://www.wheaton.edu/Media-Center/Media-Relations/Statements/Wheaton-College-Statement-Regarding-Dr-Hawkins

Friday, February 26th – Interfaith Dialogue on American Campus

*** PATEL, E. & MEYER, C. (2011) "The Civic Relevance of Interfaith Cooperation for Colleges and Universities," *Journal of College and Character*, 12,1, pp.1-9.
http://www.cic.edu/News-and-Publications/Multimedia-Library/CICConferencePresentations/2015%20Presidents%20Institute/20150106-Developing%20Interfaith%20Cooperation%20on%20Campus%202.pdf

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WEEK 8: NO CLASS

WEEK 9: RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

Monday, March 7th – Introduction to "Religious Extremism"

*** EMERSON, M.O. & HARTMAN, D. (2006) "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 32, pp.127-144.
https://www.ntpu.edu.tw/social/upload/P_1020081127150648.pdf
* JUERGENSMEYER, M. (2001) "Terror in the Name of God," *Current History*, 2001, pp.357-361.
http://w3.salemstate.edu/~cmauriello/pdf_his102/Terror%20in%20the%20Name%20of%20God.pdf

Wednesday, March 9th – Christian Fundamentalism and Muslim Extremism

*** HEDGES, C. (2011) "Fundamentalism Kills," retrieved on 9 August 2015, from the World Wide Web:
http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/fundamentalism_kills_20110726

Friday, March 11th – US Government Approach to Combatting Extremism

*** THE WHITE HOUSE. (2011) "Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism," retrieved on 8 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:
https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/empowering_local_partners.pdf
** US DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY. (2015) "Countering Violent Extremism," retrieved on 8 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:

http://www.dhs.gov/topic/countering-violent-extremism

WEEK 10: ANTI-SEMITISM

Monday, March 14th – Historical Overview

*** ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE (2013) "A Brief History of Anti-Semitism," retrieved on 9 August 2015, from the World Wide Web: http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/Brief-History-on-Anti-Semitism-A.pdf

Wednesday, March 16th – Anti-Semitism Vs. Islamophobia

*** AL JAZEERA (2015) "Head to Head – Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia," retrieved on 21 July 2015, found on the World Wide Web: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyJrJibO0SQ

Friday, March 18th – Israel and Anti-Semitism

*** ROIPHE, A. (2015) "Is Zionism Racism?" retrieved on 21 July, found on the World Wide Web: http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/190139/is-zionism-racism
*** KLUG, B. (2003) "No, anti-Zionism is not anti-semitism," retrieved on 21 July 2015, found on the World Wide Web: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/dec/03/comment

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WEEK 11: ISLAM IN AMERICA

Monday, March 21st – Islam, It's Not a Monolith

*** UNITED STATES STATE DEPARTMENT. (UNKNOWN) "American Muslims," retrieved on 6 January 2015, found on the World Wide Web: http://photos.state.gov/libraries/amgov/30145/publications-english/American_Muslims.pdf
** GREGORIAN, V. (2001) "Islam: A Mosaic, Not a Monolith," retrieved on 6 January 2015, found on the World Wide Web: https://online.wsu.edu/courses/islam/modules/01/Vartan-Islam%20A%20Mosaic%20Not%20a%20Monolith.pdf
* UL-HUDA, Q. (2006) "The Diversity of Muslims in the United States: Views as Americans," retrieved on 7 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web: http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr159.pdf

Wednesday, March 23rd – The Constitution and Sharia

*** RASHID, Q. (2014) "America's Muslim Problem: Anti-Shariah Laws and the Threat to American Civil Rights," *Claremont Journal of Religion*, 3,2, pp.18-72.

http://claremontjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/America%E2%80%99s-Muslim-Problem-Anti-Shariah-Laws-and-the-Threat-to-American-Civil-Rights-by-Qasim-Rashid.pdf
** SACIRBEY, O. (2013) "Sharia Law In The USA 101: A Guide To What It Is And Why States Want To Ban It," retrieved on 6 January 2015, found on the World Wide Web:
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/29/sharia-law-usa-states-ban_n_3660813.html
* FADEl, M. (2012-2013) "Islamic Law and American Law: Between Concordance and Dissonance," New York Law School Law Review, 57, 2012/2013, pp.231-242.
http://www.nylslawreview.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2012/11/NYLS_Law_Review_Volume-57-2.Fadel_.pdf

Friday, March 25th – Muslim American Women

*** KARASU, S. (2013) "Muslim-American Women in the United States: What is Considered Muslim Enough," retrieved on 8 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:
http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/appsych/opus/issues/2013/spring/karasu
** FEUER, A. (2015) "Linda Sarsour Is a Brooklyn Homegirl in a Hijab," retrieved on 8 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:
http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/09/nyregion/linda-sarsour-is-a-brooklyn-homegirl-in-a-hijab.html
** AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION. (2015) "Discrimination Against Muslim Women – Fact Sheet," retrieved on 8 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:
https://www.aclu.org/discrimination-against-muslim-women-fact-sheet

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WEEK 12: ISLAMOPHOBIA

Monday, March 28th – The "Three I's"

*** LEAN, N. (UNKNOWN) "Islamophobia in the United States: A Case of the Three 'I's," retrieved on 8 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web:
http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/Public/focus/essay1009_islamophobia_united_states.html

Wednesday, March 30th – Islamophobia is Racism

*** SAYYID, S. (2008) "Racism and Islamophobia," retrieved on 24 March 2014, from the World Wide Web: http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/2008/03/26/racism-and-islamophobia/

Friday, April 1st – The Islamophobia Industry

*** ALI, W., CLIFTON, E., DUSS, M., FANG, L., KEYES, S., & SHAKIR, F. (2011) "Fear, Inc.: The Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America," Center for American Progress.

https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2011/08/pdf/islamophobia.pdf

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WEEK 13: THE FUTURE OF RELIGION IN AMERICA

Monday, April 4th – Religion – By the Numbers

*** PEW RESEARCH CENTER. (2015) "North America," retrieved on 10 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web: http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/north-america/
*** WEBER, P. (2015) "America will be less Christian – and much more religiously ambivalent – in 35 years," retrieved on 10 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web: http://theweek.com/articles/549568/america-less-christian--much-more-religiously-ambivalent--35-years

Wednesday, April 6th – Dechristianization?

*** LADERMAN, G. (2013) "America's Religious Future: Dechristian (Not Secularization," retrieved on 10 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/gary-laderman/religion-in-america_b_3632516.html

Friday, April 8th – Religious Pluralism – The Way Forward

*** PATEL, E. & MEYER, C. (2010) "Defining Religious Pluralism: A Response to Professor Robert McKim," *Journal of College and Character*, 11,2, pp.1-4. http://think.stedwards.edu/ministry/sites/think.stedwards.edu.ministry/files/Defining%20Religious%20Pluralism.pdf
** THE BOISI CENTER (2015) "Religious Pluralism in the United States," *The Boisi Center Papers on Religion in the United States*. https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/boisi/pdf/bc_papers/BCP-Pluralism.pdf

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WEEK 14: BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Monday, April 11th – Pluralism, Beyond Tolerance

*** ECK, D. (2006) "From Diversity to Pluralism," retrieved on 5 July 2015, from the World Wide Web: http://www.pluralism.org/encounter/challenges

Wednesday, April 13th – Family and Interfaith Communities

*** KATZ, S.M. (2014) "7 Ways for Interfaith Families to Find Community," retrieved on 10 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/susan-katz-miller/7-ways-for-interfaith-families-to-find-community_b_5796670.html

Friday, April 15th – Recommendations From the White House

*** PRESIDEN'TS ADVISORY COUNCIL ON FAITH-BASED AND NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERSHIPS. (2010) "A New Era of Partnerships: Report of Recommendations to the President," retrieved on 10 January 2016, found on the World Wide Web: https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/partnerships-interreligious-cooperation.pdf

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WEEK 15: PROSPECTS & CHALLENGES IN THE FUTURE

Monday, April 18th – TBD

Wednesday, April 20th – TBD

Friday, April 22nd – TBD